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DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

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Pakistan: Challenges in the Next Year

Summary

Pakistan in the next year faces potentially serious threats to its security from the Soviets in Afghanistan and India. Islamabad's support for the Afghan resistance has increased the risk of a tougher Soviet policy toward Pakistan--including limited cross-border attacks--if Moscow concludes that President Zia's domestic support has weakened, there are new strains in US-Pakistani relations, or the United States is intensifying its efforts through Pakistan to bleed the Soviets in Afghanistan. Relations with India are tense and could degenerate as a result of mutual accusations of interference in each other's affairs or Pakistan's nuclear program. The likelihood of major coordinated Soviet-Indian efforts to destabilize Pakistan is low.

In our view, however, Pakistan's most serious challenges will be domestic rather than foreign. Soviet and Indian regional policies are more likely to be affected by developments in Pakistan than the other way around. Both Moscow and New Delhi could try to take advantage of Islamabad's domestic difficulties to weaken and destabilize Pakistan.

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This memorandum was prepared by [redacted] the Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh Branch, South Asia Division, Office of Near Eastern and South Asian Analysis. It was coordinated with the Office of Soviet Analysis. Information as of 19 July 1984 was used in its preparation. Questions and comments should be directed to Chief, South Asia Division [redacted]

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The Soviet Threat

A significant increase in insurgent effectiveness in Afghanistan could lead to a tougher Soviet policy toward Pakistan--possibly including cross-border attacks:

- Moscow regards President Zia's commitment to the Afghan resistance as a major reason for its failure to control Afghanistan, and the Soviets' growing frustration in containing the insurgency increases their incentive to intimidate and destabilize Pakistan:
- So far, however, Moscow has not been willing to exert greater pressure on Pakistan to control Afghanistan, and the Soviet leadership probably will continue to avoid policies that carry the potential of confrontation with the United States.

A significant increase in casualties and equipment losses--particularly aircraft--

would increase the chances of greater Soviet military pressure on Pakistan.

That the Soviets have not increased pressure on Pakistan probably reflects their appreciation that a tougher policy in the present conditions would be less likely to alter Zia's policies or lead to his overthrow than to strengthen his regime and result in closer US-Pakistan ties, including in regional security matters:

- The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan actually has strengthened Zia's hand at home by providing him considerable latitude in dealing with domestic problems and the political opposition, and allowing him to resurrect security ties with the United States.
- Most Pakistanis judge present Soviet capabilities to pressure Pakistan as limited by the Afghan insurgency, the relatively small force the Soviets have in Afghanistan, and the still poorly developed military infrastructure in Afghanistan.

The Zia regime would not be intimidated by the potential of limited cross-border raids by Soviet or Afghan forces so long as it has US support.

The Soviets probably could not unilaterally destabilize Pakistan, but they could take advantage of domestic unrest to try to neutralize Pakistan. Moscow presumably might believe that if besieged domestically, Islamabad would be vulnerable to outside pressure to alter its foreign policies. The Soviets would have to be careful, however, to avoid overt threats to Pakistan's

security which might allow Zia to redefine the crisis from a popular referendum on his rule to the issue of Pakistan's survival as an independent country. [REDACTED]

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Even if Zia's regime collapsed, a successor government would not necessarily be more accommodating to Moscow:

- Another military regime would be likely to continue the broad outlines of Zia's policies regarding Afghanistan, closer relations with the United States, and a commitment to Middle East security.
- A civilian government--even one led by the "leftist" Pakistan People's Party--would be constrained from a radical reversal of policy by the national consensus on supporting the Afghan insurgents and the attitudes of important foreign allies, including China, Saudi Arabia, and the United States. [REDACTED]

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The Indian Threat

Most Pakistanis view India as a threat to their country's survival, and Zia has exploited this national consensus to buttress his regime in times of domestic turmoil--most vividly, last fall during the Sind crisis:

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India and the Soviet Union share the common goal of diminishing and neutralizing Pakistan's role in the region, but from different perspectives:

- While the principal Soviet concern is Afghanistan, the Indians are worried that US-Pakistani cooperation undermines New Delhi's regional political and military dominance and threatens their security interests in the Indian Ocean.
- India sees the US-Pakistan relationship as having assumed a dynamic of its own and no longer dependent on common cause in Afghanistan.

It is from this perspective that India regards the US entree to Pakistan--particularly the sale of modern arms--as destabilizing to regional security. [REDACTED]

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The likelihood of a major Indo-Pakistan war in the next year is slight, but the chances increase as tension grows amid mutual recriminations of meddling:

- Pakistan has been careful in the current Indian internal crisis in Punjab State to avoid provocative actions that could lead to an unwanted military confrontation, despite its apprehension about India's extensive military movements on its side of the border.

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Prospects for Instability in Pakistan

Despite the external threats from the Soviets in Afghanistan and India, Pakistan's most serious challenges are domestic. President Zia stands a good chance of remaining in power for the next few years because his political opposition is fragmented and

lacks credibility. His handling of the Sind crisis last fall strengthened his support in the Army. Nonetheless, there are political, economic, and sectional factors that could quickly undermine Zia's regime--and which could be exploited by the Soviets and India:

- Mismanagement of the transition to civilian rule--which is to begin with elections promised by March 1985--by precluding greater political activity and suppressing opposition parties could result in a backlash against Zia within his most important constituencies in Punjab Province and in the Army.
- A decline in the economy or a rapid drop in foreign remittances would lead to opposition by important interest groups and the public generally, particularly if domestic competition for resources increased.
- Failure to address political and economic grievances in Sind and Baluchistan Provinces could lead to serious ethnic violence with nationwide implications, including the prospect of militant regional separatism.
- The growing number of Afghan refugees in Pakistan could aggravate all of these factors as they become a political constituency in their own right, especially to the extent they conclude they could never return to a liberated Afghanistan.

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Implications for US Policy

In view of Pakistan's uncertain situation in the coming years, the United States will face potentially difficult policy alternatives:

- A US policy aimed at closer military cooperation with Pakistan in regional security matters could be counterproductive and harm Zia's political standing because of the broad support in Pakistan for nonalignment. Such a policy would further harm US relations with India and aggravate Indo-Pakistan tensions.
- US support for the Zia regime in a time of domestic turmoil could provoke widespread anti-Americanism in Pakistan and potentially harm relations with a successor government. On the other hand, failure to back Zia could undermine his regime and leave Pakistan more vulnerable to increased Soviet pressure from Afghanistan.
- Failure of the US to meet Pakistan's expectations in the arms supply relationship, or aid restrictions imposed because of Pakistan's nuclear program, would reinforce the view of many Pakistanis that the United States is an

[REDACTED]

unreliable ally. In that case, Pakistan would be more likely to reach an accommodation with the Soviets on Afghanistan and probably accelerate its nuclear weapons development. Either development would significantly increase the external pressures on Pakistan [REDACTED]

SUBJECT: Pakistan: Foreign and Domestic Challenges

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